

## **Note:**

The Comms Kit is a document created by the Assembly Team (MASS LBP) and developed in coordination with the Communications Departments of the City of Victoria and District of Saanich for their use in promoting the events and updates of the Citizens' Assembly to the broader public. Each Comms Kit includes a date on which it was considered approved by all parties and ready for use. Questions about the Comms Kits can be directed to the Assembly Team at [info@victoriasaanich.ca](mailto:info@victoriasaanich.ca)

## **Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly (VSCA)**

### **DRAFT Digital Communications Plan: Phase II**

April 2, 2024

**City of Victoria:** Amy Bronee

**District of Saanich Comms:** Kelsie McLeod

#### **Background**

Over the past decade, City of Victoria and District of Saanich have considered whether they should amalgamate and become one municipality. During the 2018 General and Local School Board Elections, both municipalities asked a "Community Opinion Question" to gauge public support to establish a Citizens' Assembly to study the issue and reach consensus on a recommendation. The question asked voters whether they were in favour of establishing a "Citizens' Assembly to explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages" of amalgamation. Voters in both municipalities supported this proposal and now, after being delayed by the pandemic, the Citizens' Assembly is proceeding.

The Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation is a deliberative process intended to allow regional residents to actively participate in developing and evaluating the case for amalgamating City of Victoria and District of Saanich. Residents will consider the costs, benefits and disadvantages of an amalgamation of the municipalities. The Citizens' Assembly will be an impartial advisory body charged by both councils to provide detailed consensus recommendations concerning the proposed amalgamation.

Forty-eight (48) randomly selected area residents will serve on the Assembly, meeting over eight day-long sessions between September 2024 and April 2025. Members of the public will be invited to make submissions to the Assembly and attend special roundtable meetings. The Assembly will submit its final report to both councils in June 2025. The Assembly will work to represent all residents and exemplify high standards of transparency, accountability and robust civic participation.

#### **Objectives of Phase II**

- Re-introduce the Citizens' Assembly to the public
- Announce the Civic Lottery (a call for Assembly volunteers)
- Alert the public to the Assembly website and other ways to get involved
- Communicate above in concert with [press release](#) (Apr 15)

#### **Target Audiences**

- Victoria and Saanich residents

#### **Strategy**

- Synchronize timing and use consistent messaging across Victoria and Saanich communication channels.

- Direct all comments and questions re: Citizens' Assembly to MASS LBP.

### **Special Considerations**

The decision to amalgamate has far-reaching consequences and many people have strong opinions and feelings about it on both sides of the issue. There is the possibility that social media posts related to the Citizens' Assembly and amalgamation could attract a significant number of negative comments and interactions. There are advantages and disadvantages to disabling the comments on social media posts to prevent this.

#### **Pros**

- Prevents amplification of negative, inaccurate or inflammatory statements.
- Provides a safe space where users can get factual information.
- Reduces staff time to monitor, respond and moderate comments.

#### **Cons**

- Risk to corporate reputation by appearing closed to dialogue or unwilling to hear from the public.
- Diverges from standard corporate practice.
- The act of disabling comments could overshadow the content and become the story.
- Without engagement to boost the post via the algorithm, the posts may reach less people.

### **Recommendation: Leave commenting enabled.**

Given that this is an important opportunity to communicate about the Assembly, it is recommended to proceed as usual and closely monitor the responses to determine if the approach needs to be changed.

Specifically, the following is recommended:

- Proactively direct questions and comments to MASS LBP in initial posts.
- Explicitly state that City of Victoria and District of Saanich are not directly involved with the Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly.
- Provide a heads up to staff responsible for monitoring the page about the possible inflammatory nature of the issue.
- Follow internal comment moderation policy and use platform moderation tools as needed.
- Designate a senior comms staff for the social media moderator to connect with for timely advice and direction regarding any inappropriate comments or an overwhelming number of responses.
- Prepare a standardized response to ensure consistency between Victoria and Saanich accounts.
- Connect Victoria and Saanich social media staff to each other so they have quick and easy access to confer on any issues that arise.

This decision may need to be revisited depending on the type of engagement the initial posts generate. If it is determined that commenting needs to be disabled in the future, it will be important to explain the reasons for this in advance of turning off the function and to offer alternative ways for the public to share their feedback.

## Key Messages

- The [Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation](#) is a unique exercise in municipal democracy in which members will explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of an amalgamation of City of Victoria and District of Saanich.
- The Citizens' Assembly was commissioned by the elected councils of both municipalities, and supported by a public referendum which took place in 2018.
- MASS LBP is running the Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly at arms-length from both municipalities to safeguard the independence of the process.
- All comments and questions related to the Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly should be directed to [info@victoriasaanich.ca](mailto:info@victoriasaanich.ca) or via phone at 1-833-319-1901.

## Tactics

[Press Release \(link here\)](#)

Date	ACTIVITY	AUDIENCE	RESPONSIBLE	NOTES
April 15	Update web pages	Victoria and Saanich residents	Victoria Saanich	See text below and use images provided by MASS LBP
April 15	Add event listings to municipal websites	Victoria and Saanich residents	Victoria Saanich	See text below and use images provided by MASS LBP
April 15	Facebook Instagram LinkedIn Twitter	Victoria and Saanich residents	Victoria Saanich	See text below and use images provided by MASS LBP
May 28	Facebook Instagram Twitter LinkedIn	Victoria and Saanich residents	Victoria Saanich	See text below and use images provided by MASS LBP

## Website Update

<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/local-government/committees-boards/citizens-assembly-standing-committee.html>  
<https://www.victoria.ca/city-government/boards-and-committees/citizens-assembly-council-committee>

The [Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly \(VSCA\) on Municipal Amalgamation](#) is mailing out 10,000 invitations to randomly selected households in both municipalities in search of volunteers for the forthcoming Assembly.

Any resident of Victoria or Saanich whose household receives an invitation and is 16 years of age or older is eligible to volunteer and serve on the Citizens' Assembly. 48 respondents will be randomly selected by civic lottery in a way that broadly represents the diversity of each municipality.

Members of the Assembly will help shape the future of our great region and perform an important civic duty. As a member of the Assembly you will:

- Learn about municipal affairs, governance and services
- Share your perspectives on the issues and our region
- Hear from a diverse group of experts in civic affairs
- Deliberate on the pros and cons of amalgamation
- Work towards consensus on key recommendations
- Draft a report for both councils to consider

The Citizens' Assembly is tasked with exploring the costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation between the two municipalities, and making a recommendation to councils. The Assembly will meet for eight full-day Saturday sessions, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., between September 2024 and April 2025.

The deadline to respond is May 30, 2024.

Learn more at [victoriasaanich.ca](https://victoriasaanich.ca).

MASS LBP is running the Victoria Saanich Citizens' Assembly at arms-length from both municipalities to safeguard the independence of the process. All comments and questions related to the Victoria Saanich Citizens' Assembly should be directed to [info@victoriasaanich.ca](mailto:info@victoriasaanich.ca) or via phone at 1-833-319-1901.

## Event Listings

<https://www.victoria.ca/community-culture/events>

<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/news-events/events-list.html#categories=saanich-community-events>

Listed under Community Events

Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation – Civic Lottery  
Deadline May 30, 2024

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## Twitter/X

Watch your mailbox! The Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation is mailing 10,000 invitations to randomly selected households in Victoria and Saanich in search of volunteers for the upcoming Assembly. The deadline to respond is May 30. More info at [victoriasaanich.ca](https://victoriasaanich.ca).

[in reply to above]

Any resident age 16+ is eligible to volunteer. 48 volunteers will be randomly selected by civic lottery to represent the diversity of the region. Help shape the future of our great region and perform an important civic duty. #citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

## **Instagram Story**

1

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2

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## **Facebook**

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#citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

## **LinkedIn**

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#citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA

**TEXT FOR MAY 14**

## **Facebook**

Have you received an invitation to join the Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly (VSCA) on Municipal Amalgamation? 10,000 invitations were mailed out last month to randomly selected households in both municipalities in search of volunteers for the forthcoming Assembly.

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### **Twitter/X**

Were you one of the 10,000 people who received an invitation to volunteer for the Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation? The deadline to respond is May 30. Be a part of shaping the future of our great region. Find out more at [victoriasaanich.ca](http://victoriasaanich.ca).

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#citizensassembly #victoria #saanich #VSCA [victoriasaanich.ca/register](http://victoriasaanich.ca/register)

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## STANDARD RESPONSE

<City of Victoria/District of Saanich> is not directly involved in the Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly. MASS LBP is running the Assembly at arms-length from both municipalities to safeguard the independence of the process.

Visit [victoriasaanich.ca](http://victoriasaanich.ca) to learn more about the Assembly process and mandate, key dates and events, and how you can be involved.

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